

TALES OF LIVERPOOL

Essay No 1



Marble Halls

Allerton

A Lengthy Courtship

William Roscoe (1753 - 1831), was born to William Roscoe and Elizabeth Roscoe (née Stephenson) at the Bowling Green Inn which stood at the top of Mount Pleasant - at that time, a pastoral and tranquil outpost overlooking the Mersey. William's father was an innkeeper and market-gardener, and as William grew older, he helped with the daily chores involved with growing and marketing the produce - later recalling fondly "*how fulfilling it was to labour all day and sleep soundly each night.*" As a counterpoint to his manual work, William's mother instilled in him a love of poetry and books; and in 1777, aged 24 he published his poem *Mount Pleasant* recalling his happy days spent with his parents. Both of their influences would remain with him throughout his lifetime.



Bowling Green Inn - Birthplace of Roscoe

Fig 1 Birthplace of Roscoe

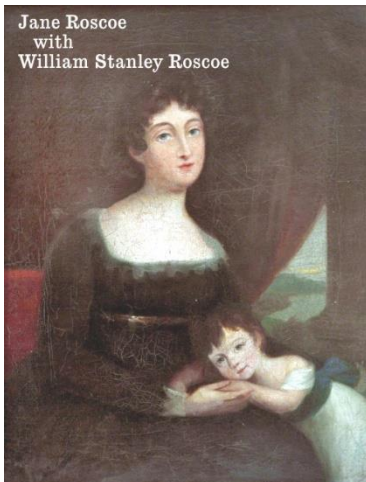


Fig 2 Mrs Jane Roscoe (1757 - 1824)
And William Stanley Roscoe
John Williamson (1751 - 1818)

Aged 21, he became a solicitor - a profession he viewed as an inconvenience which got in the way of his other interests. In the same year of 1774, Roscoe met the family of the Church street draper, William Griffies, whose middle daughter Jane (1757 - 1824) had the same interests as Roscoe, and they began a courtship which lasted seven years, until Roscoe was able to provide for them both. Much of their courtship consisted of lengthy letters and poems to each other, written in that unique Victorian style, replete with the grandiloquent prose they loved so much. They married at last in February, 1781, in St Anne's Chapel, and in 1783, were living in 27 Rodney street, moving to the Dingle in 1790, and in 1793, to Birchfield where William purchased a field (opposite what is now Walton Hall Park) and commissioned the building of his own house.

Their 10 children soon followed.

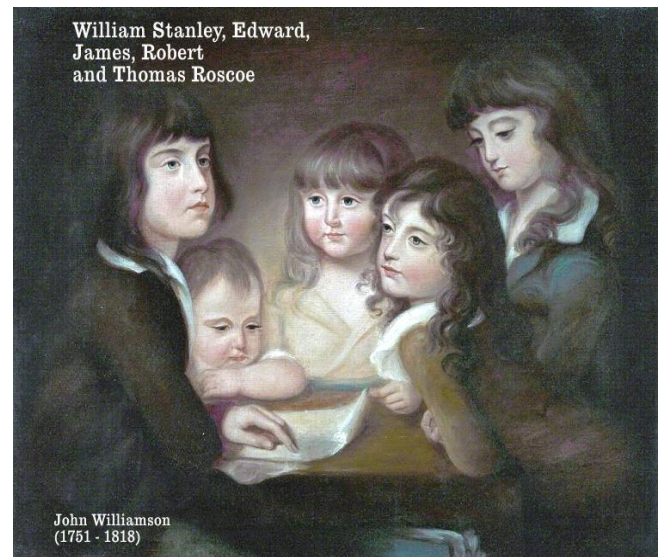


Fig 3 The Elder 5 Sons, of William Roscoe.
John Williamson (1751 - 1818)

1 William Stanley (1782 - 1843) Cambridge scholar.

2 Elizabeth (1783 - 1783) Died in Infancy

3 * **Edward (1785 - 1834) Married Margaret Lace**
- Daughter Margaret Roscoe (Sandbach)

4 James (1787 - 1829) Married Miss McGibbon

5 Robert (1789 - 1850) Married and had 8 children

6 Thomas (1791 - 1871) A translator of Italian

7 Richard (1793 - 1864) Became a physician in Edinburgh

8 Mary Anne (1795 - 1845) Described as "*remarkably handsome, with very fascinating manners*"

9 Jane (1797 - 1853) Became a writer of poetry, hymns and novels, still in print.

10 Henry (1800 - 1836) Wrote his father's biography

How Roscoe combined his work as a solicitor with the other passions which consumed him is unfathomable - his biography *the Life Of Lorenzo De' Medici*, published in 1794, had been universally admired, he was respected as a historian, a poet, a bibliophile and an art collector, he studied botany, was a member of the Linnaeus Society, was briefly a Member of Parliament, and courageous for his stance against the abolition of slavery, in a place which thrived upon that trade. He was also passionate about Italian art and history - but never travelled beyond London.

Purchase of Allerton Hall

As Roscoe's work as a solicitor became ever more tedious, he made the decision to retire at the early age of 46, and concentrate upon the things that truly mattered to him. In 1799, he purchased Allerton Hall, where in their younger days, William's father had worked as a gardener and his future wife as a housekeeper. There had been a house on the site since the 15th century but the present house dates from 1732 when Sir John Hardman (1694 -1755) and his brother, James (1692 - 1740) bought it for the sum of £7,700 and rebuilt it in the Palladian style. The Hardman brothers made their fortunes from the slave trade, involved in 46 slave voyages from Africa to the West Indies. Jane (1702 - 1799), James' wife, outlived them both, and stayed in the hall until her own death in 1799, when it was purchased by Roscoe.



Fig 4 Plate With
Allerton Hall

In the same year that he purchased Allerton Hall, Roscoe came to the rescue of his friend, William Clark, whose bank, which stood on the corner of Castle street and Dale street, was failing. Clark was living in Italy, when Roscoe turned the bank's fortunes around, with an influential shareholder, Sir Benjamin Hammett, so impressed that he asked Roscoe to become a partner - on Roscoe's refusal, Hammett threatened to bankrupt the bank altogether if Roscoe did not agree. In order to save his friends, Roscoe finally capitulated - it was a selflessness which would one day come back to haunt him.

There is a lady who enters Allerton Hall from time to time carrying voluminous reams of documents. Seated in Roscoe's library, she studies the genealogy of past owners of the Allerton estate which is extremely complex, and more often than not follows false trails, littered with impenetrable truths and abstruse falsehoods.

In a very simplistic explanation of a story worthy of a Catherine Cookson novel, a girl by the name of Grace, was born circa 1715 - according to some accounts "of dubious parentage." Grace lived at Allerton until 1833, when Jane Hardman, wife of James Hardman, began to engineer a match between the previous owner of the estate, the aristocratic Richard Percival, who was much older. Grace now aged 18, had fallen in love with the estate coachman, John Hazelhurst, and the couple escaped across the river to Eastham, whereupon, Grace and her descendants were disinherited for 99 years and her name was never mentioned again. John and Grace married in 1833, and eventually produced 9 children. John died in 1800 and Grace died in 1795, close to Jane Hardman's death, which sparked a search for Grace's inheritance which included Allerton Hall. In 1831, Grace and John's eldest son, William Hazelhurst, gathered together a volume of documents which contained "indisputable proof of his mother's claim" and with the volumes in his keeping, the solicitor set off to the courts in London; he got no further than Allerton Delph, where his coach was found overturned and the man dead. Over the years, many people have tried to prove Grace's claim, delving into records which have proven elusive to say the least. Oh yes, the lady at the beginning of this tale is very pleasant with a family of her own - I met her once and she was very helpful --- her name is Hazel - Hazel Hazelhurst.

The Butterfly's Ball

Despite his self-imposed workload, Roscoe threw himself into family life wholeheartedly; celebrations of his eldest daughter's birthday were in the arrangement of a theatrical masque in which most of the family took part, each contributing to a stanza within a dramatic poem. When Roscoe, to his great surprise, could find none of the family interested in Leo X, he began a famous whimsical poem, entitled *The Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast*, which was written in 1802 for "little Robert" who Roscoe names in the text. Within the scintillating fantasy, Roscoe created a host of insects, and tiny animals, invited to a Ball by the Butterfly; they included wasps and hornets which "promis'd, that Evening, to lay by their Sting," frogs and snails, and moths and a spider which performed acrobatics, - all seen safely home by a glow- worm "who came out with his light." It is interesting to note within the text "There came the Beetle, so blind and so black, Who carried the Emmet, his Friend, on his Back" -- the "emmett" which is an old Cornish word for an ant, is used today as a withering description of tourists. Published in 1807, the composition has been copied many times but the original phantasmagoria still retains its unique magic,



Figure 5 The Butterfly's Ball

The First Botanic Garden

Roscoe was always surrounded by influential and wealthy friends, so that when he proposed the building of a Botanic garden, there was no lack of subscribers; In Victorian aristocratic circles there had grown up an insatiable curiosity around plants and animals, and even indigenous peoples from exotic lands, so that no less than 450 subscribers snapped up shares selling at 12 Guineas each. The Botanic came into being in 1802, (Myrtle street, Olive street etc, roughly defining its boundary) with the centrepiece being a 240 foot long Conservatory housing temperate to tropical plants - at the opening ceremony, Roscoe made a speech 65 pages long - easily the least requested item in the Central Library archives. The gardens quickly attained international status, with members of the Royal Family often in attendance. Expeditions funded by the gardens often took years before returning with new plants and orchids which were the beginning of the famous collection which survives to this day. However, the Victorian class system ensured that the gardens would be the sole preserve of the aristocracy of the town - so that, admission was by ticket only, which was unaffordable to the average family. It goes without saying, that Roscoe was a frequent visitor, taking a special interest



Figure 6 William Roscoe
by John Williamson (1753 - 1818)

in a certain classification of tropical plants. His fascination led to the publication of a book in 1828 entitled: *Monandrian plants of the order Scitamineae: chiefly drawn from living specimens in the botanic garden at Liverpool*. Still in print today, the book sells at inordinately high prices, having fine paintings within each page. Among the many acknowledgements is one that says "also to my daughter-in-law, Mrs Edward Roscoe."

The Multilingual Mendicant

Known for wandering round town, on one occasion, Roscoe came across a vagrant on the waterfront. *The North Wales Chronicle*, delighted somewhat cruelly in reporting on the man's wanderings, describing him in the September, 1832, edition, as "most disgusting and offensive. He wears a long black beard, pendant over his breast. His face was filthy in the extreme." The beggar's real name was Richard Robert Jones (1779 - 1843), commonly known as Dic Aberdaron. Dic's father was a carpenter who built his own cargo boat to shuttle between Wales and Liverpool; the son was little help to his father and was regularly beaten as he spent his time daydreaming. Eventually, Dic left home and spent most of his life wandering from place to place, without any particular purpose. However, Dic had one redeeming feature which appealed to Roscoe, and that was a gift for languages, including Hebrew and Greek, and an astonishing 12 other Classical languages. It is a measure of Roscoe's kindly nature that he paid the man a regular stipend of 6 shillings per week, and was so fascinated by the polyglot beggar that he wrote a short biography of him. On his visits to Hafodunos, Gibson also gave him money; Dic died penniless and was buried in St. Asaph Cathedral.



Jones

The Marble Fireplace



Fig 8 John Gibson's magnificent fireplace

Roscoe also visited the marble works of Samuel and Thomas Franceys, which stood on Brownlow Hill, where Pleasant street school now stands. He was looking for a chimney-piece for his library at Allerton Hall, and had taken along a print called *Alexander Ordering Homer's Iliad to be Placed in a Casket taken from the Defeated Darius*, hoping to find a craftsman who could sculpt it in marble. The Franceys introduced their youngest sculptor, John Gibson, whose first



Fig 9 John Gibson aged 26
On the morning he left for Rome
By Thomas Griffiths

impression of Roscoe was of "a tall, magnificent-looking, old gentleman, his hair as white as snow, thick brows and benevolent in manner" - Roscoe was about 50 at the time. However, Gibson specialised in classical subjects, and it was an honour to be chosen at such a young age for such a complicated sculpture; Roscoe was highly delighted with the finished article, and they soon discovered a mutual love of classical art in all its forms. Gibson became a regular visitor to Allerton Hall, where he was privileged to be allowed to copy the rare prints Roscoe had imported from Italy, at no little cost.

John Gibson, (1790 - 1866), was born "in the shadow of Conway Castle" whose father, William and his mother, Jane, were both Welsh speakers and spoke English with difficulty. In 1799, William, who was also a Methodist Minister, persuaded his family that a better life was to be found away from their native Wales, and they joined a group of Welsh emigrants on their way to Liverpool, bound for the New World. When Jane Gibson saw the hundreds of masts of sailing ships, swaying in the breeze, the thought of an ocean voyage unnerved her to such an extent that she refused to embark on such a hazardous venture; instead of making a new life in America, the family settled into a house in no 13 Green Lane, off the newly laid-out Clarence street.

Apart from allowing Gibson the freedom of his library, Roscoe introduced the young sculptor to many of his influential friends - Sir John Gladstone, the father of W.E. Gladstone also commissioned a chimney-piece, and was so pleased with the finished work that he gifted him 10 guineas; the D'Aguilar family of Wavertree Hall became special favourites of Gibson, and Rose D'Aguilar (Lawrence) (1780 -1857) exchanged letters with him throughout her lifetime. Rose was also a great friend of Felicia Hemans, who lived on Wavertree High street, and they frequently travelled together to Allerton Hall for discussions with Roscoe and poetry and the fine arts. As time went by, Gibson began a yearning to work in Rome, which rapidly grew into an obsession which consumed him - awaking one morning from a vivid dream in which an eagle had lifted him from the streets of Liverpool and carried him to Rome (by a strange coincidence, the name Aguilar is the Italian name for eagle). When Gibson's dream at last became reality, he left for Rome in 1817, clutching an introduction to the renowned Antonio Canova, penned by Rose D'Aguilar's brother. Before his departure, Gibson left a letter for his mentor which read in part:

"Whenever my imagination glides to Allerton, it is with deep feelings of gratitude and respect, for it was there that my inexperienced youth was led to the path of simple art; it was there that it caught the flame of ambition; it was there that the suggestion of Rome was given birth to."

A Good Deed Rebounds

While Gibson's career was just beginning under the tutelage of Canova, Roscoe's life at Allerton was about to end when in 1816, the bank began to fail once again, culminating in his bankruptcy in 1820. Many of his books were purchased by friends, and many of his paintings found their way into the Walker Art Gallery. However, Allerton Hall was no longer sustainable financially, and in 1822, Roscoe and his family moved to Rake lane (now Durning road), then 5 St. James walk (site of Liverpool Cathedral), and finally 180 Lodge Lane. Two years later, after 40 years marriage, Jane passed away, and Roscoe died suddenly on the 16th of December, 1827, whilst talking to "little Robert." His memorial stands on the burial ground of the old Unitarian Chapel on Renshaw street.



Fig 10 Hafodunos Hall 1885

Hafodunos

The Origin of Hafodunos

There is a legend that Winifrede, an only child of noble parentage, was alone at home one day, when Prince Caradog arrived at the house and she was forced to fight off his advances. Winifrede ran out of the house but Caradog caught her and decapitated her - where her head fell, a spring of water with healing properties sprang forth. Her uncle Beuno, took Winifrede's head and beseeched the assembled crowd to pray with him that she was brought back to life; their prayers were answered when Winifrede miraculously arose from the dead with the price of her martyrdom being a red line around her neck for the remainder of her days. The legend arose in the 7th century, but in 1138, her remains were taken to Shrewsbury, and on the way, the now Saint Winifred rested at Hafodunos which is Welsh for "Rest for One Night."

Throughout the medieval period, Hafodunos was the domain of the Lloyd family with a succession of mansion houses arising within the estate, which were either renovated or built anew. By 1805, Hafodunos was a large, but undistinguished mansion house, but by 1830, the upkeep became onerous and the Lloyds were forced to sell the estate they had occupied for centuries

Samuel Sandbach (1769 – 1851)

Samuel was born in Tarporley, Cheshire, and in 1788, aged 19, he joined his uncle (also, Samuel Sandbach) in Grenada, where he was put to work as a clerk.

However, Samuel showed such promise that after 18 months, he was asked to go into a partnership, managing plantations in Demerara. In 1799, Samuel moved to Liverpool to establish another branch of the enterprise in St Anne street and Mansfield street, at the same time, marrying Elizabeth Robertson (1782 - 1859) in December 15th, 1802, in Glasgow. In 1813, the Dutchman Philip Frédéric Tinne (1772 - 1844) a ship-owner joined the consortium, which became Sandbach, Tinne & Co. The partnership was so successful that they became known as The "Rothschilds of Demarara." In 1825, the partners commissioned a ship named the *Sandbach*, which carried sugar, molasses, coffee and rum between Demarara and Liverpool - each time it entered the Mersey the bells of St Nicholas Church pealed. The *Sandbach* sailed for an astonishing 50 years until she was finally broken up in 1875 in a Birkenhead shipyard.



Fig 11 The *Sandbach* picking up the Liverpool pilot off the Great Orme
Samuel Walters (1811-1882)

The slave-trade had been abolished in 1807, followed by the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833 - in anticipation of this, Sir John Gladstone was instrumental in agreeing terms for compensation for the loss of all slaves. The compensations were fabulous amounts; Samuel part owned two estates with 500 slaves, totalling up to a figure of £35,000, with Samuel's sons, Henry Robertson Sandbach and William Sandbach both receiving payments for their shares in the company. However, the

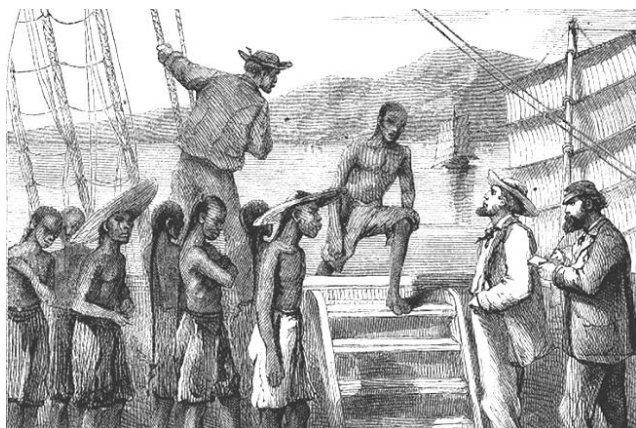


Fig 12 Coolie Ships of the Chinese Diaspora

plantation owners were nothing if not adaptable to change, and in the following years they partners amassed a staggering number of ships;

Demerara, Arise (1870), Jura (1875), Sheila, Brenda, Genista, St Kilda, Pandora, Apelles, British Nation, British Statesman, Columba, Oscar, Diana, and Clyde (1813).

Largely forgotten today, these ships were commonly called "coolie ships" and over many years they transported Indian and Chinese labour to take the place of the slaves they had lost. The imported "coolies" were only fractionally better off than their predecessors, and in effect, the slave trade to Guyana never ended until the 1920's. The word "coolie" once in common parlance, is now highly offensive.

Mayor of Liverpool in 1831, a partner of the Herculaneum pottery, and between 1803 and 1828 father of 12 children, living at Woodlands (now demolished) in Aigburth,

Samuel took the extraordinary step to move to Wales; surrounded by a vast estate, in 1833, the mansion he bought was the Lloyds' old home, Hafodunos estate. Samuel had the honour of becoming High Sheriff of Denbighshire in 1839. He died at Woodlands in 1851, aged 82, and is buried in St. George's Church, Everton.

Edward Roscoe (1785 - 1834) and Margaret Lace (Roscoe) (1786 - 1840)

The business of supplying hand - made nails for sailing ships was a lucrative one, not only for ship-building but exporting for log cabins in America, and Edward Roscoe, the second son of William Roscoe, had been in business as an iron merchant from around 1810. The workshops were situated in Sefton road, Toxteth park, with offices at Salthouse Dock. William Jevons had started as an ironmaster around the same time as Edward Roscoe in offices at Rumford Place - the firm was still business in 1939. Edward Roscoe married Margaret Lace in 1810, the daughter of Margaret Lace and John Lace, an attorney.

Margaret Lace (Roscoe) was a talented artist and botanist who painted a number of illustrations for William Roscoe's *Monandrian plants of the order Scitamineae* and made a point of crediting her work. Margaret's magnum opus is a book of her own work *Floral Illustrations of the Seasons*, published in 1829. Writing in that familiar florid prose, Margaret explained her love of nature:

"There is no pursuit which fills the mind with more noble and exalted sentiments than the study of these works of nature. To her own sex, to whose particular notice she offers it, she trusts it may prove a useful and correct guide to their tastes, both in their selection for a flower garden, and as objects for their pencil."

Margaret's book and individual engravings sell today at astronomic prices.

The children of Edward and Margaret (Lace) were - William Roscoe born in 1810, who lived only until 1813. **Margaret was born on the 28th April 1812**, and Edward Henry in 1813.

"Far From Cities, Far from Strife Here We Pass our Rural Life"

Margaret Sandbach

Margaret Lace passed on her love of nature and poetry to her daughter (also Margaret) who enchanted all who met her. Margaret (the daughter) wrote an unfinished memoir, *Recollections of My Childhood*, in 1847, which tells us a great deal about her personality; a copy made

in 1856, by a friend of Margaret, contains an introduction, which begins with a rambling homage, so

filled with hyperbole it is almost indecipherable. A short passage reads:

"It is an erroneous deistical notion - an impious reflection on the wisdom of the Omniscient, and a libel on the equity of Heaven to aver that the "executive" of this world is delegated and entrusted to the most incompetent of the human race. The reverse is the fact. But to leave less room for the exhibition of man's pride, presumption and arrogance, it has been wisely ordained that the highest talents, should not as a rule, coexist with a high degree of self-esteem." And so it goes on for several pages until we reach Margaret's memoir proper which is thankfully far more concise.

Born at Garden Lodge, Lancaster, on the 28th of April, 1812, Margaret recalls;



Fig 14 Margaret Roscoe by an unknown artist

"Mine was a peculiarly happy childhood, a fair field for the sowing of that good seed, the growth of which, alas! has too frequently become impeded by the 'thorns and briars,' which have since 'sprung up and choked it.' - a reference to the bad health which later afflicted her. Margaret quickly returned to her theme of childhood: "I was indeed very happy with one dear brother (Edward Henry), 18 months younger than myself, and a father and a mother, no words of mine would be adequate to praise or describe."

When Margaret was just a few months old, the whole family went to live "in a retired part of Wales," a village called Pistill. It was there that her older brother, William, died in 1813; Margaret would have been only 2 years old when, she was found by her frantic parents lying next to his dead body.

Happier days came later, when Margaret and Edward Henry spent their childhood roaming the hills and valleys around the village - it was later said with some truth, that that the rustic beauty of her Welsh surroundings were the inspiration for Margaret's poetry.

Henry Robertson Sandbach



Fig 13 Henry Robertson Sandbach

A Friend for Life

Margaret was aged 9 when she returned to Liverpool in 1821, and later met her husband, Henry Robertson Sandbach, the eldest son of Samuel Sandbach, living at Woodlands, Aigburth. Margaret, aged 20, and Henry, aged 25, married on the 4th May, 1832, in the Church of St Michaels in the Hamlet. A few months later, they set off on the Grand Tour, visiting the beauty spots of Europe, one of which was Rome, where word of mouth had made it almost obligatory for wealthy patrons to purchase sculptures from John Gibson in his studio in Via della Fontenella, off the Via del Corso. During the winter of 1838/1839 Gibson and his mentor's granddaughter formed a rapport, reinforced by their mutual love



Fig 15 St. Digain's Church

of poetry and classical sculptures; becoming friends for life, Gibson wrote no less than 171 letters to Margaret. The Sandbach's were greatly impressed with a clay model of *The Hunter and His Dog*, commissioning a marble sculpture for Hafodunos, followed closely by a commission for *The Wounded Amazon*. A bas-relief dedicated to Edward and Margaret called *Hope* was commissioned in 1840, and a gift from to Margaret, entitled *Aurora* was begun in 1841, followed in 1843 by *Psyche and Eros*. In 1850, Margaret sent a letter to Gibson, enclosing a book called *Aurora and Other Poems*, with the dedication to Gibson himself. The letter ended: "Accept them too, in remembrance of days gone by, when a venerable form, bent to bless you amid the shades of Allerton."

On their return from Rome, the Sandbach's spent an increasing amount of time at Samuel Sandbach's home at Hafodunos, and in 1844, moved in permanently. Margaret spent her days there improving the gardens, following her mother's talent for painting botanical subjects, and forming a Garden Society. Although she was never blessed with children of her own, she also taught at the village school, in subjects which included morality. Her writer friend wrote on the children finishing their education - "Mrs Sandbach procured respectable situations for the girls, and we believe there is not an instance of girl educated at her school, who in after life deviated from the path of virtue." At the same time, our writer continued somewhat naively - "Mr Sandbach filled the office of clerks &c, in some of the most respectable mercantile houses in Liverpool and the West Indies." Following another plunge into the pool of Victorian prose, which painted Margaret as "remarkably graceful" with "frequent and vivid flashes of poetical electricity," her biographer gave a fulsome account of her intellect and her poetry.

As poor health began to take hold, she began to be acutely aware of her own mortality, and occasionally mentioned "her long season of bodily illness." In a curious and intimate section of her memoir, triggered by a vivid dream she had of being (in Heaven and seeing Him), Margaret pondered deeply upon the nature of God and reverted to thinking about her father who she revered - "To my mind the idea of God as a father was very natural, because to me, my father was everything that was good and great and powerful and protecting. In heart, he was all that was loving, devoted and tender: anxious for our highest good and ever watchful of our outward comfort and happiness." Margaret then thought of God as "My Father in Heaven," and in the touching duality that she had conjured up, she found a source of comfort for what lay in store.

Bitter Tears

In that perverse way that life too often eclipses joy, Margaret's idyllic lifestyle was not to last, when in her late 30's the dark shadow of serious illness lingered over her. Gibson had been informed by letter that Margaret had fallen ill - in his words to "one of the most painful ills to which flesh is heir," and in 1844 and 1851, he visited Hafodunos, spending many hours in the gardens accompanied by Margaret, discussing their mutual passion for poetry and sculpture. As Margaret's illness had been diagnosed as breast cancer, she underwent a mastectomy; in the days before anaesthetics, the pain she endured is beyond imagination. As her condition deteriorated, Gibson became distraught, writing in one letter the heart-rending cry ;

"Oh do not join the Angels yet - we shall weep bitter tears whenever you do join them."



Fig 16 Saint Digain's stained glass window

But Gibson's plea went unheeded, and Margaret died on June the 23rd, 1852, aged just forty. She was buried at her own request in the churchyard of 13th century St Digain's Church, Llangernyw, with a headstone saying simply **Margaret Sandbach, 1852**. The following year, Henry commissioned a stained glass window, which was themed *Faith, Charity, Brotherly Kindness* and *Hope* which was placed within the wall of the south transept – *Faith* is identified as Margaret. Saint Digain's stained glass window is often visited by tourists (including the present King Charles) who marvel at the ancient Yew tree - a venerable 4,000 years old.



Fig 17 Christ Blessing the Little Children - John Gibson

Second Marriage

On his father's death, Henry had inherited Hafodunos making substantial improvements to the landscaping of the estate, and creating an embryonic sculpture room to house the increasing numbers of Gibson's works. On November 13th, 1855, William married again, to Elizabeth Charlotte Williams (24th Dec, (1827 - 1911) whose family owned estates in Jamaica, with the ceremony taking place in Llanfechain, where she was born. The first of their 5 children was born on September, 1856, and christened Samuel. In the same year of 1855, Gibson sculpted a bas-relief memorial to Margaret, and in 1858, returned once again to discuss the architecture of the sculpture hall, and left with a commission for a *Nymph and Cupid*. Gibson was in the habit of taking street scenes in Rome and translating them into classical sculptures; on this occasion he saw a young girl lifting her baby to kiss him; a tiny gesture which he turned into one of his finest works, a version of which was bought by the Prince of Wales, later Edward VII, who visited Gibson's studio in Rome in 1859 and 1862. In 1862, at Henry's request, Gibson was asked to sculpt a relief of *Christ Blessing the Little Children* in memory of Margaret; Gibson's biographer and friend, Lady Eastlake, identified the figure on the extreme left as Henry Robertson Sandbach, and the figure on the extreme right as Gibson himself - it has been conjectured that Elizabeth and some of her children are also featured.

The Building of Hafodunos

In an abrupt and dramatic turn of events, circa 1858, Henry took the unprecedented decision to demolish the Hafodunos Hall of his father's era, and rebuild the whole thing to his own specifications, employing the finest architect in Britain, Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811 - 1878), the designer of St Pancras station and The Albert Memorial. Work began late in 1861, and was completed in 1866, at a cost of £30,000 (more than £4 million today). With wood-carvers from Italy working a full 4 years on all the interior woodwork, stone-masons carving arched windows, and bricklayers working to Scott's specifications, the finished building was a neo - Gothic masterpiece. The Gate Lodge and Keeper's Cottage were little gems in their own right. To complete the works, Elizabeth was more than grateful for the private gas-works which provided heat and light. During the building work, Henry and his family decamped to Eaton square, Belgravia, in a house they had rented.



Fig 18 Above the main entrance Henry Robertson and Elizabeth Charlotte Sandbach initials intertwined.

Over the years, 53 acres had gone wild in the lower garden with many rare plants, slowly being strangled. Henry set out to return the gardens to their original state, beginning with the magnificent terraced garden. Visitors to Hafodunos were especially impressed by Gibson's Rotunda, which Scott had based on the Monk's Kitchen, Glastonbury, in which subdued lighting highlighted each statue - Gibson never saw the marble hall as he died in Rome in 1866, and was buried in the English Cemetery.

The Inheritors

Henry enjoyed his majestic creation for nearly 30 years, until he died on the 19th June, 1895, aged 78, whereupon his eldest son, Samuel, now Colonel Sandbach (1856 - 1928), inherited the estate.

Henry's 2nd son, Henry Martin Sandbach (1858 - 1895), also an army officer, died 6 months after his father in harrowing circumstances in Somaliland; attacked by a lion, he was badly mauled, later dying of his wounds.

Henry's 3rd son, Arthur Edmund Sandbach (1859 - 1928) became a Major General in the British army, serving in Egypt, Sudan, Burma, South Africa during the Boer War where he earned the Distinguished Service Cross, Ireland during the Easter Rising, and in 1917, at the age of 58, survived the horrors of the First World War. Arthur inherited the estate after Samuel but died just 3 months later, leaving his daughter as the sole inheritor.

Geraldine Pamela Violet Sandbach (1909 - 2001), was aged just 19, when she was left the owner of 2 estates, Bryngwyn in Powys and Hafodunos in Clwyd, and a Jamaican plantation of 4,000 acres. In 1932, Geraldine married Captain Graham Lawrie Mackeson, and two years later they decided together that the Hafodunos estate and the Old Hope plantation were too much of a burden to maintain and in 1934 sold them both.

A Mindless Act



Fig 19 Venus and Cupid bas-relief
After the fire

Hafodunos was at first used as a school, with the sculptures left intact, until in 1969 the school closed down, and it was decided that the sculptures should be sold. Most of the sculptures were snapped up by The Walker Art Gallery and The National Museum of Art, Cardiff.

The mansion was for a short time a college, then an old people's home, and as time went by was a subject of money-making schemes, each more bizarre than the next. At the same time the fabric of the house was deteriorating rapidly with little attention paid to its upkeep, but on the evening of the 13th October, 2004, 4 youths in a mindless act of vandalism, set fire to Hafodunos; the resulting conflagration devastated the interior of the house, destroyed all the fine woodwork and staircases, and left a smouldering ruin.

Thanks to the inadvertent sale of the statues 34 years ago, in what first appeared to an insensitive error, turned out to be the saviour of Gibson's works of art. And the shrewdness of the two art galleries, both formed exhibition rooms based around the works of John Gibson.

Marble Halls

For reasons undefined, Gibson is sadly neglected in Conway, but the same cannot be said of many other places in Wales, including The National Museum of Wales, Cardiff; the gallery purchased *Aurora*, *Wounded Amazon*, *Bacchante and Tiger*, *Hunter and His Dog*, *Nymph Kissing Cupid* and a bas-relief of *Phaeton Driving the Chariot of the Sun*.

The sculptures that found their way to the Walker Art Gallery were supplemented in 1971 by what is possibly John Gibson's finest work - *The Tinted Venus* (properly *Venus Verticordia*, the stealer of men's hearts) - which is the centrepiece to the sculpture hall. The memorials to Margaret Sandbach, a portrait of William Henry Robertson, the bas-relief of *Christ Blessing the Children* were placed on the walls, while several statues are from Hafodunos.

However, several replicas are made by John Gibson's brother, Benjamin (1811- 1851). When the Gibson family remained in Liverpool, Benjamin contracted tuberculosis, which haunted him throughout his life. An accomplished sculptor in his own right, Benjamin joined John in Rome in 1837, carving copies of Gibson's work and others of his own design. An authority on classical literature and antiquities, Ben died in Bagni di Luca on 13 August 1851, aged just forty. His library of 170 antiquarian books was later donated to the University of Liverpool, the beginnings of its vast library.

John Gibson's third brother Solomon Gibson (1796 - 1866) began working as a sculptor in no 1 Green Lane, Pleasant street, from where, at the age of 16, he exhibited four models at the Liverpool Academy. At the age of 20 he was an independent sculptor living at 69 Islington. However, a lack of contracts made him bitter, earning a reputation as confrontational and abrasive.



Fig 20 Gibson's Nymph Kissing Cupid

There is an exquisite sculpture by Solomon in a glass case in the Walker - called *Venus and Adonis* it is a neo - classical study no more than 6 inches tall, and stands as a sad reflection of the talent that Solomon threw away.

John Gibson's friends, Richard James Wyatt (1795 - 1850), and Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770 - 1844), are represented, along with two of his pupils, Harriet Hosmer and Edmonia Lewis (1830 - 1908) an African American Objiway . Gibson would have been quietly content where his statues are displayed, in the company of works by his brothers, a few of his many apprentices, and some of his friends in the Walker Art Gallery, but a special place would have been reserved for his memorials to his soul mate, Margaret Sandbach, the granddaughter of William Roscoe.

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